

Dear Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter, and members of the Public Health Committee.

My name is Melanie Wilde and I am Program Coordinator from the Branford Board of Education School Based Health Centers. I am testifying today in support of RB 299, An Act Concerning the Adoption of Regulations to Establish Minimum Standards for School Based Health Centers. The language in this bill states that the Department of Public Health shall adopt regulations to establish minimum quality standards, rather than 'may adopt regulations'.

School Based Health Centers (SBHCs) provide high-quality primary care medical, behavioral health, and in some sites dental services to children in preK - grade 12 settings. SBHC's address a range of health concerns that impact a child's ability to learn and be successful in the classroom. Children, families, schools, and communities all benefit from all of these critical health services.

The Department of Public Health provides funding for 96 SBHC sites. The vast majority of these sites offer comprehensive care that include medical and behavioral health services. The minimum standards as described in this bill will ensure that all sites meet quality standards, provide a fundamental level of consistent services from site to site, meet state and federal regulations, meet facility requirements, and are sponsored by a licensed entity. Organizations that can meet the criteria of the SBHC definition and the minimum standards can assure parents, schools, and health care partners that they are providing the highest quality care possible to children and adolescents that use the services.

Branford BOE supports, through DPH funding, three, fully comprehensive licensed school based health centers. The SBHC's offer medical and behavioral health services and soon to offer dental hygiene throughout the district. The Branford demographics vary and the population is certainly changing. Branford, over recent years, has seen an influx of immigrants and working poor. The need for healthcare amongst our student population is becoming more and more critical with the limited access and health insurance needs of the changing population.

The legislatively-mandated School Based Health Center Advisory Committee, with representation from state agencies, SBHC organizations, the CT Association of School Based Health Centers, school nursing, and the American Academy of Pediatrics, worked on the development of these minimum quality standards for ten months. The standards reflect the input from all of the partners and will provide a framework to guide both new and existing School Based Health Centers. I support the language as set forth in RB 299 and urge you to adopt this bill to ensure the highest standards for Connecticut School Based Health Centers.

Respectfully submitted,

Melanie Wilde
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Branford Board of Education